

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----122428 052044Z /62

O 051923Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1657
AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2941

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

CAIRO FOR USDEL ATHERTON AND AMBASSADOR EILTS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, IS, EG
SUBJ: TEXT OF BEGIN MESSAGE TO SADAT

1. THERE FOLLOWS VERBATIM TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S
RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT SADAT'S PERSONAL MESSAGE. RESPONSE IN FORM
OF AN UNSIGNED LETTER WAS HANDED TO EMBOFF AT 1910 HOURS
TONIGHT BY PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT KADISHAI.
LETTER IS DATED JERUSALEM MARCH 5, 1978. IT CARRIES ISRAELI
CLASSIFICATION OF SECRET.

2. QTE:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF MARCH 1 WHICH
OUR GOOD FRIEND ALFRED ATHERTON HANDED TO ME PERSONALLY.

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, TO WHOM WE ARE ALL GRATEFUL
FOR HIS UNTIRING EFFORTS IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE, HAS KINDLY
UNDERTAKEN TO DELIVER TO YOU THIS, MY REPLY, DURING HIS NEXT
VISIT TO CAIRO.

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PERMIT ME, FIRST, MR. PRESIDENT, TO DISPOSE OF MIS-
UNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING QUOTATIONS AND MISQUOTATIONS.

ON JANUARY 8, 1978, I READ IN THE PRESS ABOUT
"BURNING OF SETTLEMENTS." THAT SAME EVENING, I MADE A PUBLIC
SPEECH IN WHICH I REACTED TO THE QUOTATION AS REPORTED. HOW-

EVER, IT WAS ONLY ON JANUARY 13 THAT IT WAS DENIED BY AN EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN. I, OF COURSE, ACCEPTED THE DENIAL WITHOUT QUESTION. IT IS A PITY, INDEED, THAT A FULL FIVE DAYS ELAPSED BEFORE THE CORRECTION WAS ANNOUNCED.

DURING YOUR VISIT TO JERUSALEM, WHICH YOU MADE IN KIND RESPONSE TO MY INVITATION, WE HELD A PRIVATE AND FRIENDLY CONVERSATION. I REMEMBER EVERY WORD OF OUR DIALOGUE WHICH YOU SUMMED UP WITH A CLEAR STATEMENT THAT YOUR FORCES WOULD NOT CROSS THE PASSES. MINUTES LATER, I GAVE MY CABINET COLLEAGUES, WAITING IN THE ADJACENT ROOM IN THE KING DAVID HOTEL, AN ACCOUNT OF OUR CONVERSATION AND REPORTED YOUR STATEMENT VERBATIM.

AS I TOLD YOU IN ISMAILIA, IT WAS ON THE BASIS OF THIS CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT WE BUILT OUR PEACE PLAN AND ELABORATED IT IN WRITING. WE WERE, THEREFORE, ASTONISHED ON FINDING THAT THE MAP SUBSEQUENTLY PRESENTED BY WAR MINISTER GAMASSY TO DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN DELINEATED A DEMILITARIZED ZONE OF ONLY 40 KILOMETERS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY. THIS REPRESENTS A DIFFERENCE OF BETWEEN 140-160 KILOMETERS COMPARED TO WHAT WE HAD ENVISAGED IN OUR JERUSALEM CONVERSATION. I DID NOT SAY IN THE KNESSET THAT YOU WENT BACK ON YOUR WORD. QUITE THE CONTRARY: I CALLED UPON YOU, IN KEEPING WITH YOUR PLEDGE, TO INSTRUCT YOUR MILITARY STAFF ACCORDINGLY. I DO SO AGAIN THIS THIS PERSONAL MESSAGE, MR. PRESIDENT.

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I FEEL BOUND TO SAY, MOREOVER, THAT IT IS I WHO WAS MISQUOTED. IN JERUSALEM, I CONDUCTED AN EXCHANGE WITH A GROUP OF EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS IN THE COURSE OF WHICH ONE OF THEM MADE THE STATEMENT THAT EGYPT AND YOURSELF NOW RECOGNIZE "ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AND SURVIVE." I EXPLAINED TO THE GROUP THAT WE HAVE NEVER ASKED FOR SUCH RECOGNITION. EVERY NATION, I SAID, HAS THE SAME RIGHT TO EXIST, BE IT LARGE OR SMALL, STRONG OR WEAK, NEAR OR FAR. INDEED, WE WERE GIVEN OUR RIGHT TO EXIST BY THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB. WE HAVE PAID A PRICE FOR THAT RIGHT, HIGHER PERHAPS THAN ANY OTHER NATION. IT IS INHERENT; IT REQUIRES NO RECOGNITION. WHAT WE DO EXPECT, HOWEVER, ON THE BASIS OF FULL RECIPROCITY, IS THE RECOGNITION OF OUR RIGHT TO OUR LAND, SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE, AND TO ENJOY PEACE WITHOUR NEIGHBORS. THIS IS THE RECOGNITION THAT SHOULD BE MUTUALLY ESTABLISHED AS A RESULT OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS.

PERMIT ME, NOW, TO PASS ON TO OTHER ISSUES ESSENTIAL TO OUR DIALOGUE.

YOU COMPLAIN THAT "WE ARE UNFORTUNATELY STILL DEALING WITH WORDING." ALL OF US REMAIN ENGAGED IN THIS EXERCISE

BECAUSE,??;90*RSIDENT, YOUR ADVISERS PROPOSE TO US "WORDING"
WHICH HAS ONE MEANING: THAT THEBEERNMENT OF ISRAEL GIVE A
COMMITMENT OF WITHDRAWAL TO THE LINES PRECEDING THE SIX DAY WAR
OF DEFENSE. THIS IS AN OLD CONCEPT, GOING BACK TO THE AUTUMN
OF 1967. AS I SAID TO YOU IN ISMAILIA, ISRAEL IS NOT
COMMITTED UNDER RESOLUTION 242 TO SUCH A WITHDRAWAL, NOR IS IT
REQUIRED TO AGREE TO SUCH A PRE-CONDITION. IN MAY AND JUNE 1967,
WE WERE THREATENED, MR. PRESIDENT, WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR
INDEPENDENCE AND, INDEED, OF OUR PEOPLE. I REMEMBER WELL,
WHEN WE LAST MET, THAT YOU YOURSELF RECALLED THE SLOGAN OF
THOSE DAYS: "THROW THEM INTO THE SEA." ISRAEL DEFENDED ITSELF.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2941

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

CAIRO FOR USDEL ATHERTON AND AMBASSADOR EILTS

AS YOU KNOW, IT IS THE GREAT RULE OF INTERNATIONAL
LAW THAT IN THE WAKE OF THE USE OF THE INHERENT RIGHT OF NATIONAL
SELF-DEFENSE, TERRITORIAL CHANGES DO TAKE PLACE IN PEACE TREATIES.
WERE IT OTHERWISE, THE WHOLE MAP OF EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST
SHOULD BE CHANGED RADICALLY.

I WISH TO REITERATE AGAIN OUR ACCEPTANCE, IN ACCORD-
ANCE WITH RESOLUTION 242, OF THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL, BUT
NOT WITHDRAWAL TO THE LINES OF JUNE 4, 1967. IT IS THIS WORDING,
IN PRINCIPLE, THAT WE SUGGEST TO YOU IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT
PROCEED TOGETHER TO MAKE THE SUBSTANTIVE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS
POSSIBLE.

IN YOUR LETTER, YOU CONTINUE TO ESPOUSE THE FOR-
MATION, AFTER AN INTERIM PERIOD, OF A PALESTINIAN STATE IN
JUDEA, SAMARIA AND THE GAZA STRIP. MR. PRESIDENT, I HAVE TO SAY

AGAIN, AS I EXPLAINED IN ISMAILIA: SUCH A STATE, IN WHATEVER FORM, WOULD CONSTITUTE A MORTAL DANGER TO ISRAEL. AN INTERVAL OF A FEW TRANSIENT YEARS WILL NOT ELIMINATE THE PERIL. NO NATION LIVES ON BORROWED TIME. THE MORTAL DANGER MUST NOT BE CREATED.

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IN ITS PROPOSALS TO YOU, THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL INTRODUCED A NEW APPROACH AND CONCEPT. WE STAND BY OUR SUGGESTION TO COMPLETE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY FOR THE PALESTINIAN ARABS LIVING IN JUDEA, SAMARIA AND THE GAZA STRIP; WHILE SECURITY BE ASSURED FOR THE PALESTINIAN JEWS. ON HEARING THIS FROM ME IN ISMAILIA YOUR REACTION - AND AGAIN I REMEMBER YOUR WORDS VIVIDLY - WAS: "IT IS A STEP FORWARD." SUCH A STEP CAN HARDLY, THEREFORE, BE CHARACTERIZED AS "OLD" OR AS A STEP BACKWARD.

WE ALSO WENT VERY FAR IN MAKING A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL CONCERNING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS SUPPORTED BY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WHICH, IF FULFILLED, WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR ISRAEL TO ASSUME THE GREAT RISK - FOR THE FUTURE - OF WITHDRAWING OUR ARMED FORCES TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY. THIS, WE ARE READY TO NEGOTIATE FOR THE SAKE OF AN AGREEMENT AND THE PEACE.

I AM GRATIFIED TO READ IN YOUR LETTER OF YOUR WISH TO GO ON WITH THE PEACE-MAKING EFFORT AND THAT YOU ARE NOT AGAINST THE RESUMPTION OF THE TALKS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES WHICH WE AGREED TO ESTABLISH DURING OUR GOOD TALKS IN ISMAILIA. I, THEREFORE, SUGGEST DIRECTLY TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS BE RENEWED. YOU TOLD ME IN DECEMBER, AFTER HAVING HEARD OUR PROPOSALS, THAT WHILE WE HAVE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION, THE ISMAILIA CONFERENCE WAS SUCCESSFUL AND THAT DISCUSSION IN THE TWO COMMITTEES WOULD PROCEED ON THE BASIS OF THE ISRAELI PROPOSALS AND EGYPTIAN COUNTER-PROPOSALS. LET US MOVE FORWARD THROUGH THE RESUMPTION OF THE COMMITTEES' TALKS BY AMICABLE NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THEIR FRAMEWORK.

TOGETHER, LET US REVIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE JERUSALAME AND THE ISMAILIA MEETINGS. IT WAS A SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING, OF GOODWILL AND OF OPEN MINDS. THIS IS THE APPROACH WE NEED TO
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REACH AN AGREEMENT AND TO BUILD THE PEACE FOR WHICH WE YEARN.

O COURSE, WE HAVE OUR DIFFERENCES. WE KNEW IT BEFORE YOU CAME TO JERUSALEM, DURING OUR KNESSET "DEBATE," AND IN

OUR SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGES. AND YET, YOU PROPERLY SUMMED UP THESE
INITIAL MEETINGS WITH THE SENTIMENT THAT WE SHALL DISCUSS
OUR DIFFERENCES: WE SHALL NEGOTIATE.

I SUGGEST TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT WE RESUME THE
NEGOTIATIONS AS EQUAL PARTNERS TO A GREAT UNDERTAKING: THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF REAL PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

BEST REGARDS,

MENACHEM BEGIN UNQTE.

3. COMMENT. WE WILL BE SENDING OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF LET-
TER IN THE MORNING. SUFFICE TO SAY TONIGHT THAT BEGIN APPEARS
BADLY TO HAVE MIS-READ SADAT IF HE BELIEVES THE QUERULOUS AND
INJURED TONE OF THIS MESSAGE IS GOING TO PROVIDE NEW MOMENTUM
FOR THE PEACE PROCESS OR TO REJUVENATE WHATEVER PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP THAT TEMPORARILY EXISTED BETWEEN HIM AND SADAT.

4. FOR CAIRO USDEL ATHERTON. APPOINTMENT WITH BEGIN IS NOW
FIXED FOR 1830 HOURS TUESDAY MARCH 7.
LEWIS

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